

March 25, 2013

An Interview With:

NORWOOD TEAGUE

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Tubby Smith has had a long and distinguished career as a college basketball coach. He's affected a number of lives positively throughout his career, and most of all, he is an outstanding, outstanding human being.

However, I feel it's time for a fresh approach for our basketball program, for our student athletes and the program in general. We felt now following a season where there were high expectations for this coaching staff; that it was time to make a change for the benefit of our student athletes and as we build for the future.

We made this decision based on an evaluation of the overall body of work, and once we did, we decided to move swiftly in order to find the best coach and the best fit for our student athletes and the program in general. The athletic department will lead the search, along with the president's office. We will not hire a search firm. I feel that myself and our senior staff with our network will be able to find a terrific coach for the future.

Our goal is to secure the best candidate to build a Big Ten and NCAA men's basketball program that is a consistent winner and has a continued long tenure of success. We expect the new coach to manage and build the program. Expect him to recruit high-quality student athletes and develop them on and off the floor.

We are looking for the right fit for this program; not only for the program but for this great university. We will be talking to a variety of candidates, both locally and nationally. I don't want to reveal their names now, just to keep the integrity of the search going.

It's my expectation that we have a successful and winning men's basketball program here at the University of Minnesota.

Questions.



Q. In Tubby's contract, it says that you have to notify him 90 days before his termination; did you inform him a while ago before the Tournament even started?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: No. Those were contract logistics. You can ask those questions later, but it's just contract logistics that are in there, and I did not. You don't have to do that during the season.

Q. You say ongoing, in revealing names, have you already had conversations with potential candidates?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: No, I have not. I have not had any conversations. I talk to coaches a lot but not really about this.

Q. Do you have an idea now, is there a short list in your head right now of guys you're going to go after?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: You always have a short list. You always have people that you have in mind. Some are realistic, some are unrealistic but I have a list in mind. We'll work that and we'll get a terrific coach.

Q. When did you make the decision?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: You know, as I said, it is an evaluation of the overall body of work. And I'll evaluate throughout the year. But when it came down to the very end, I consulted with Dr. Kaler and felt like it was time to move on.

Q. About the date?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: No.

Q. Did you feel like this program had reached the point where it was not moving forward?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: You know, it's really a future decision. I mean, I didn't evaluate the NCAA Tournament only. Didn't evaluate really this year only.

It's more of a matter of evaluating where we are and where we're going, and want to build

for the future and know that that is a huge part of what went into play here.

Q. In the old Williams arena -- that the fans love, like I wrote this morning. Recruits come here, they think it's a dump. You don't have a basketball building which every other school in the Big Ten just about has. You have a budget which isn't as high as a lot of schools. And you've got Tubby Smith has recruited these kids for three or four years, a new coach comes in and he has to start all over. Why couldn't you wait till next year?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Again, I make the decision based on, as I said, a whole body of work and evaluate where we are now. I feel like it's by far the best decision that we can make right now.

There's a lot of -- you said there's limitations. Sure, there's some limitations. We've got a lot of great things, too, with this program. We have a great state to sell. We have an unbelievably passionate fan base and we have an unbelievable university. That's a lot to sell right now.

Q. It's a theme for the university where you are actually buying out contracts for coaches; this has got to be getting expensive for the school.

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Any time you spend money for buyouts it bothers me, as well, just like it bothers citizens of Minnesota. I hope fans will look at this one as an investment, rather than an expenditure. I don't take that lightly, it's a good question and I think we have to consider that when we make these decisions.

Q. How do you pay for this one? Do you expect some private donors, that there will be money?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: This will be out of athletic department funds. We have budget meetings every week, figure out how we can do things and it's my job to figure that out.

So it will be out of the athletic department funds. Going forward, we are always going to raise money. I don't really like to raise money for something like that, but this will be out of athletic department funds.

Q. Can you commit that when you're negotiating contracts in the future, can you promise the state tax payers that there won't be

large payouts in the future should we have to release a coach?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: We will negotiate a contract that will be smart and thorough. But at the same time, when you hire a coach and you want to hire a very good coach, you have to put buyouts in there. Otherwise, you have a major hand behind your back. But I'll be smart about that and we'll work hard in that area.

Q. Was Tubby truly surprised about the decision?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: I tell you what, he was very gracious. I could see the disappointment in his eyes, and that's hard to tell Tubby.

He's a great human being. I don't think he was totally surprised. But he was very gracious and that did not surprise me, because of the way that he conducts himself and the person that he is.

Q. He said this afternoon, early this afternoon, that he had not been told yet --

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Yes.

Q. Who will give direction in the days ahead in the basketball department?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Myself and the senior staff will give good leadership and we will be in touch with the players quite a bit. You know, they are letting it all sink in right now. But we will communicate with them heavily moving forward.

Q. Timetable for how fast you want to hire a new coach?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: You know, you want to move quickly and you want to hustle but you don't want to be too much in a hurry. So we'll move swiftly. I don't want to put a time frame on it but I want to get there as soon as we can.

Q. Did you call a meeting with the players?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: I did. I talked to them about 30 minutes ago.

Q. How much of this did it have to do with looking at the recruits that are in this state and ready to make a pretty big decision; does that factor into making a decision on this?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: You know, all of it factors in.

Again, I go back to what I said earlier, you look at a larger body of work, you look at a lot of factors and you try to come up with the best

decision possible. There was no one factor that was more important than any of the others, though.

Q. You alluded to the conversation with Tubby today; was that in person?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Oh, yeah, it was.

Q. Just the last couple hours?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: It was. It was. Those are never easy. It's harder when you've got a great guy like Tubby. It makes it difficult.

Q. You don't like buyouts -- this is a staggering amount of money for most people. What do you say to a parent who is struggling to make tuition, when you hear that kind of number with buying out a contract?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Again, I don't take it lightly either. You get down to where you have to make a decision, and again, you put everything down on paper and you try to figure out where you want to go with things, and I just felt like this was the time to have a fresh approach.

I do think that I will say again, that I hope we'll see this as an investment rather than a needless expenditure, because this program needs to be good and it has the potential to be good, if not great.

Q. Was it a balancing act? Had fund-raising with Tubby as coach -- I'm told, it had almost dried up; it had really decreased.

NORWOOD TEAGUE: It's hard to determine that, whether you say, he's giving because of someone, or he's not giving because of someone.

We've had some decent fund-raising going on. We're putting together a facility plan where we'll need a lot of fund-raising here in the future. But I can't really point to anything that says fund-raising was drying up because of the basketball program right now.

Q. What's the total number for the buyout?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: It's 2.5 this year.

Q. Any incentives included, anything like that?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: There were some payouts that were part of his contract, anyway -- I don't want to call them payouts, but bonuses for postseason play, of that nature, that are involved in

it, but that's separate from the buyout. Does that make sense?

Q. What makes you think you can recruit a top guy that you haven't been able to recite a No. 1 guy for years; Jerry Kill was No. 5 on the list, four football coaches turned him down. I don't know what number you were, but I tell you what, this school has not been able to attract top guys. Do you think that you're going to get the guy that UCLA wants or some other top school wants, unless you get your guy from VCU?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: We are going to look for the right fit for the program. Doesn't have to be the candidate that everybody thinks we should get. It's going to be the right fit for our student athletes.

If we live in the past, we are going to get drug down by the past. We have to look forward and we have to work hard while looking forward and be encouraged by that.

Q. The past few buy outs have been alone from central administration, likely that that will be the case again?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Not sure. We are working out the finances right now. We know we are going to be in good shape. I really do feel good about that. We have done some work in that area and if we did not feel good about that from our own budget, we would not have been haphazard about a decision like this.

Again, I don't take that flippantly, a buyout number. It's tough. But we are looking at it as an investment for the future and something we feel like will propel us.

Q. Was it a perception of getting rid of a coach off an NCAA Tournament victory?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Again we didn't evaluate this on just the NCAA Tournament, whether we won or lost. Didn't evaluate it really solely on this year. It's my job to be -- to make decisions about the visions of the program and where we are going as far as our trajectory. And it was really a matter of the overall, where we were and where we wanted to go.

Q. Would the decision have changed if he had made the Sweet 16?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: I don't want to speculate on that. I don't know.

Q. With where you guys are, are you looking strictly at head coaches --

NORWOOD TEAGUE: I don't want to limit us to what we are going to look for. I want somebody here who, as I said earlier, is going to recruit at the highest level, develop kids on and off the floor, and manage and build the program.

And you know, it may not be -- you look at names and you think: Well, he should go for that person or he should go for this person.

It's more about fit, and for what I feel like that person brings to the table and how it fits to where we are now.

Q. You say you're evaluating more than just wins and losses; what were the shortcomings?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Again, I don't want to get into the details and rehash that. I think it's just an overall summary of where we are now.

Q. Does not using a search committee, are there ways that that limits who you can --

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Schools don't use search firms and they do use search firms. There's a lot of great ones out there. But in this case, we thought it was better that we do not. We don't feel like it's limiting in any way.

Q. Word of Tubby's firing was out there before he found out about it; how does that happen?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Everything leaks, all the time. We know that. No one intentionally did that. Things leak and that's just the way it is.

Q. You talk about recruiting at the highest level, yet the same time, you want to run a clean program and you want the right guy in here and a lot of teams go for the one-and-done type players; how fine of a line do you walk when you look at Tubby's body of work and what he's accomplished within that criteria you just outlined and now you go in a different direction looking for someone who can do differently some of the same things?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: You know, again, I refuse to feel that we cannot grow as a program and not be great as a program. I feel like if we bring someone in who has a fresh approach and fresh ideas, that we could surprise ourselves.

I know there's things that you have to operate within and we are always going to do that but I do feel like we can go out and get a terrific

candidate and feel good about it and move forward and really move the program forward.

Q. Did you talk to players on this year's team?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: No, no. I would never do that.

Q. Were you worried about possible transfers?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Well, I mean, I've been through a lot of transitions like this, and you know, there's always -- kids have to let things sink in.

They are going to be emotional early on, and we are going to be in constant communication with them and talking to them and making them feel good and assure them about the future.

Q. Will that there's no practice facility built yet hamper you in this search? Tubby was waiting for it for six years and it hasn't happened out there.

NORWOOD TEAGUE: It's out there and it is what it is. Certainly it's our intention to build one and I want the new coach to know that. While we don't want to put a concrete time frame on it, I want them to know that we are going to move in that direction as quickly as we can.

Q. You're not keeping any assistants on as an interim?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: No. The whole staff has been relieved and myself and the senior staff will be heavily involved with the kids moving toward.

Q. Is it fair to say that you and Mike Ellis both feel that especially a basketball search is right in your comfort zone and your strength?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Yeah, I mean, it's our job, or my job to conduct a search and I feel good about that. I feel like we've got a lot to sell, as I said earlier.

I think sometimes we forget about the amazing positives here. Only Division I school in the state, in the Big Ten, passionate following, amazing old -- not old; historic arena, and we have got a lot of great things to sell, and these other jobs, they have their things, but we have Minnesota to sell and that's a great thing.

Q. Would you like to offer the next coach a salary that's comparable to the top half of the Big Ten?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: It will all be negotiable. Again, you want to be smart with your funds and try to be a good steward of those resources.

So it's negotiable depending upon kind of where you are at that time and you know, what the background is of that coach and maybe what they have earned in the past.

Q. So you're not necessarily looking for a coach that made less than Tubby?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: No, no, it's kind of pretty wide open.

Q. How much are you aware already that -- I think this is true -- there's not a black Big Ten basketball coach or football coach at this point. Does that enter into your thinking?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Oh, it always does. We want to hire more minorities, both on the coaching side and the administrative side. I think about it all the time. And want to do our best to do a better job there.

We have hired Quincy Lewis recently, and want to do a good job there in the future in a number of different areas. I think about it all the time, very important.

Q. Is 2.5 the number this year, is that the total?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Yes.

Q. How do you think this will affect recruiting? They have recruited these kids for two years and they have the best crop in the State of Minnesota. I know Ron Jirsa had a fantastic relationship with Jones, and remember the family told me if Minnesota had a chance to get him, because of that. Now your new guy comes in, he might not get a guy, and you've got to start all over with these guys, and the Mike Krzyzewskis and the Tom Izzos and all these people have recruited these guys all this time, and now you're going to bring in a fresh guy to compete with those guys.

NORWOOD TEAGUE: Well, it's my intention to bring in somebody that will compete with everybody in the country and on a national level to recruit. We want somebody who does that, and as I said, develops them on and off the floor.

Someone who manages the program at the highest level. That's our intention going forward.

Q. I know this is men's basketball, but Pam Borden's status?

NORWOOD TEAGUE: I'm going to just talk about men's basketball now. I don't want to go into any other areas. That's not fair to the other sports.

Thank you very much. Appreciate it.
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